

COTO DE CAZA A START

Developers to Push Recreation Projects

BY DON SMITH
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NEWPORT BEACH— Can a profit-making corporation find both happiness AND money in ecology, environment and recreation?

For a group of 75 executives, architects, artists, designers and engineers on the third floor of the Macco Co. headquarters here, the answer has to be "yes." If it isn't, they are out of a job.

Together, they make up the staff of a new corporation known as Recreation Environments Inc., a subsidiary of Great Southwest Corp. Like the name implies, their principal reason for existence is recreation.

Once only the recreational arm of Macco Realty Co., REI was reorganized last November when some \$40 million in Macco assets were transferred in exchange for 100% of REI's stock.

Today, its principal asset is the 5,000-acre Coto de Caza private hunting and riding club in the Santa Ana Mountains. But, the multi-million dollar project is only the first of several such clubs to be developed throughout the country, REI chairman Edwin D. Ettinger of San Clemente, contends.

Diverse Interests

Ettinger, a veteran of recreation projects who cut his teeth on Disneyland and Walt Disney Productions, says Coto de Caza isn't the only type of development REI has in mind, however.

Recently, the firm announced it had purchased both the Movieland Wax Museum and Japanese Village and Deer Park in Buena Park from Allan Parkington. And a recent press release announcing the official formation of REI also indicated it is looking for 10,000 acres in Orange County to develop as a privately operated public park.

In a recent interview, Ettinger also announced that REI has several other projects in the works throughout the country and into Hawaii and Europe, although the heavy emphasis will continue to be in California.

Ettinger, whose career has taken him to Sea World, Expo 67, University City Studio Tours and Rancho California since leaving Disney 10 years ago, talked of the company's plans just after returning from a business trip to Europe where REI hopes to find a location for a Western-type village. With him was E. James Murar, another Rancho California veteran, who serves as REI president.

Company Motto

The two summed up the idea behind the new corporation in one phrase: "There are too many things for people to recreate with today and too few places for them to recreate it."

With that somewhat ungrammatical precept as the company motto, Ettinger and Murar say they are in the midst of a wide-ranging effort to solve the problem while still showing a profit for both REI and Great Southwest Corp.

"Recreation things — moist homes, mobile homes, campers, tent trailers, even tents, are big business today," Ettinger says, "but once a person buys one, he finds out he has no place to go or the places he can go are so crowded, he's lucky just to get in."

The problem first came home to Ettinger four years ago when he drove by the gates of Doheny Beach State Park near his San Clemente home at 8 a.m. one day to find a long line of waiting trailers, campers and motor homes outside.

"I stopped to talk to some of those in line," he says, "and found out that this was their normal procedure. They would line up every morning and wait for someone inside to leave so they could take over their camping spot."

"But, even if they got in, they only had a tiny area for their own use which meant that they spent the week staring at their neighbor's tent, camper or trailer while he stared back at theirs. To me, that's not really much fun."

Ettinger and Murar say they strongly feel that anyone who can afford to buy the recreational equipment being sold to day would rather spend \$5 a night for a camping spot big enough to give him a sense of being in the outdoors than spend \$2 for the usual tiny place found in most state and federal campgrounds.

One of their goals is to prove that theory and one of the first places to do it will be a 14,000-acre development on the Gavitoa coast north of Santa Barbara.

New Village

In addition to Gavitoa Coast, REI also is developing Gavitoa Village which will take over the spot along the highway which formerly held a tiny general store and post office.

Another project being developed by REI is Lake California in the River Lakes Country along the Sacramento River near Hedding. Covering 6,000 acres, it is principally designed as a second-home development.

Both Ettinger and Murar say REI's operational talents are what set it apart from most development firms which have gone into the recreation business.

"We don't want to move in, sell the land and move out," says Ettinger. "We think we also have an obligation to see that the person or family who buys the property, has something to do once they arrive."

Project in Hawaii

One of the new firm's biggest projects, both in size and in potential, is tentatively being called Hawaiiana. Billed as a joint venture, it involves an estimated 25,000 acres in the Hawaiian Islands formerly used to grow sugar cane by the firm of C. Brewer and Co. Ltd. and ADM Inc. Great Southwest Corp., REI's parent company, obtained long-term development rights for the land through a joint venture with the owners, then turned over the task to its new subsidiary.

In addition to its own projects, REI's design section also is working with another GSC subsidiary, Six Flags Inc., to develop a new Six Flags over Mid-America project in St. Louis. The firm also is working on a Benesh the Seven Seas development near Dallas with Six Flags Inc.

That firm, which handles GSC's theme-type parks, already operates Six Flags Over Texas at Arlington, and Six Flags Over Georgia.

Ettinger says one of his major discoveries during his trip to Europe was that people there have problems similar to those in the United States.

"I walked through a tremendously big recreational vehicle show near Paris," he says, "and everyone I talked with had the same complaint. There was no place for them to go."

Solve Problem

And, he points out, REI also has plans to solve that problem by developing a Wild West village, providing it can find the right property.

"It should be a smash," he says. "They love cowboys over there."



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